

Interview with Dorothy Greene Johnson

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DOROTHY GREENE JOHNSON

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Q: This is Lew Schmidt on the 27th of May, 1991 interviewing Dorothy Johnson who was one of the very early participants in the program which subsequently became the binational center program. This dates back to 1942, I believe. Dorothy I am going to ask you to give us a brief rundown of your biographical background—what your education was and how you managed to get started in this program. And then you can carry it on from there. So, please start with a brief backgrounder on yourself and how you got into the program.

Education And Entry Into Office Of TheCoordinator Of Inter-American Affairs

JOHNSON: I was born and raised in Chicago and went to Hyde Park High School which in those days was a breeding ground for scholars because it was in the University of Chicago neighborhood. I attended the University of Chicago, partly on scholarship and graduated with my bachelor's degree in March of 1942.

One of my professors at the University was Walter Laves who later was one of the main architects of UNESCO. He had left the University to take a position in the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Office and I was sufficiently intrigued by this so that after my

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graduation I applied for a job there and got one—a secretarial job in the Coordinator's Office. I worked at the Coordinator's Office for about a year and a half, first in the office that was publishing *En Guardia* and then I moved into the propaganda analysis office there as an analyst.

1943: Transfer To Department Of State In The Cultural Centers Office

I got interested in getting into the State Department because of its enormous prestige. I had a friend, at that point, who was already in the State Department. I applied over there and actually took a cut in status and pay to take a job in the State Department. I came into Cultural Centers I would say probably around the middle of 1943. At that point I would say that the Washington staff was literally brand new. Carl Sauer had been brought up a few months previously from Bogota where he had been the director of center for about five years. Pat Elliott, who was directing the Washington staff of the Cultural Centers, had just come up a short time before I came. She had been assistant director to Ples Harper in Lima, Peru and had done her work, collected all her data for a Masters Degree. Elizabeth Hopkins had come in just shortly before I did in a secretarial position; I came in in a secretarial position; and there was one other person there, a much older person—Madge Guard—who had been in the State Department for quite a long time and had been handling procurement for cultural centers.

The Cagy, Indirect Manner In Which Department Of State Supported—And Operated Various Aspects Of The Cultural Program In Latin America

Q: At that time I gather from what you said that the Binational Center program had been operating for several years, although under whose auspices? Under the Department of State?

JOHNSON: That is what I would like to go in to. There is no question that the centers antedated the Washington staff. I have been thinking about this ever since I talked to you and looked at your questions. I would say that for certain you would have to say that some

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of the centers dated back at least to 1937. The reason I know that is that Sauer once said to me that his career always seemed to go in five year intervals. So I am sure he had been in Bogota for five years which would mean that he had gone down around 1937. Lionel Landry, who came in later, had been down there for several years. As far as I know every center in South and Central America that we dealt with, with the exception of Guatemala City, was already in existence in 1942.

Q: Now were they being supported by the State Department?

JOHNSON: The program was being administered covertly by the State Department, overtly by the American Council of Learned Societies. I have no documentary evidence on this, but from what I was told by a friend of mine, Eleanor Lewis, who ran the libraries and books programs and who had been there much longer than I, and things that Sauer said later, I think there was a division of thought within the State Department itself about the question of the administration of the cultural program. The State Department, which, of course, is not only a very old but the oldest of Departments, had had a lot of experience with the kinds of problems that could arise from direct administration of programs other than their own programs. So they, I think, had preferred to farm out the cultural programs to non-profit agencies, thus the Library and Book Program was being theoretically administered by the American Library Association. The Exchange of Persons Program was being theoretically administered by the Institute of Exchange of Persons in New York. Cultural Centers was being theoretically administered by the American Council of Learned Societies under Waldo Leland.

One of the things that Sauer greatly resented was this indirect form of administration. Anyone who was in the State Department at the time would understand what the problems were. I don't know if they still do this, but at that time all State Department instructions were couched in the third person. They were always addressed to the Ambassador or Consul in the Embassy or Consulate and then it was up to somebody in the field to figure out who the actual recipient of the document was. Likewise, when something came back

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up it was addressed to the Secretary of State and it was up to Coordination and Review in the State Department to figure out who the actual recipient of the communication was. I can tell you that in my career in the State Department I saw some jolly mixups as a result of this. You add to this the fact that no communication from the Cultural Center people in the State Department went directly even that way, but under a covering letter to the Ambassador or Consul via the ACLS and Waldo Leland, who actually had to then write a letter.

You can see that it was a very complicated and cumbersome way of handling a program. Moreover people like Sauer who had been in the field realized that the people in the field did not know who they were working for. They hadn't a clue as to whether they were working for the State Department or the ACLS.

Q: That raises one of the questions that I wanted to ask. Were these people recruited by the ACLS; Was that nominally the recruitment system; And who paid for their transportation down to the posts? Was there any coverage for their families? How was all that sort of thing worked out at that time?

JOHNSON: One of the things that I have to tell you right from the beginning is that I had nothing to do with the recruitment or maintenance or personnel. I was on the policy and program side of things. So whatever answers you got from Elizabeth are the best answers you are going to get on this question, because she was in charge of personnel in the later days. I can give you some impressions but they would have to be subordinated to whatever information she has given you.

I don't really know before I got there in '43 how things were handled. I presume that they were probably handled pretty much by the ACLS. But I really don't know. After I got in I know what happened basically was that these people were—the closest thing in our own experience would be a Fulbright lectureship. These people were basically people who taught English in an American high school or university or they taught a foreign

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language. I would say that probably 99 out of every 100 candidates fell into one of those two categories. They were people who, I think, didn't expect to make a career out of being down there. They just wanted to get some experience in a foreign country for two or three years, maybe at the most four or five, and I think they thought it would look good on their resum#s and it was a good chance to perfect their own knowledge of Spanish, Portuguese or French, etc. I don't think they expected to be down there for any length of time. Now some of the directors I think probably did expect to have a little more of a career.

The Anomalous Status Of BinationalCenter Employees In Early Days

One thing I am sure of is that they had absolutely nothing to do with either the Foreign Service or Civil Service. Now we in the Washington staff were Civil Service. But they had nothing to do with that. They had absolutely no benefits which in a way is not so surprising because in those days, after all, people had only been paid social security for two years, since 1940. Company pensions were unheard of, and nobody had health or life insurance benefits. So I don't think they really expected them and they weren't surprised when they didn't get them. As for maintenance, I think all that they got was exactly what a Fulbright person today would get. They got their own fare down and back, they got their salary and I think that was pretty much it.

Early Origins Of (Binational) Cultural Centers

Q: Who—or what—was it that had established the centers in the first place? They had to have a physical structure within which to operate and who or what financed them indirectly or otherwise? Was it by the State Department or had it been partially by private funds? How did that come about?

JOHNSON: Again I can only give you my impression because although one of the things I did in the first few months I was in the program was literally read through every document that was in the files, I never did see anything that would answer that question. Now maybe, if one had access to the Interdepartmental Committee files (Interdepartmental Committee

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on Inter-American Affairs) or to the files of Dr. William Schurz who was the Director of the Cultural Relations Division, you might get an answer from those files.

My impression was that they were wholly grass-root organizations. I think that after Roosevelt developed the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933, he tapped into, I think, a changing development in South America which I think was partly responsible for cultural centers. There was, as you know, an active British Council program in South America which had something very much the equivalent of the American cultural centers. I happened to see that BBC television series last year "Remembrances of War" which was based on the experience of a husband and wife team who were in the British Council first in Bucharest, then Athens and then Cairo. You get a pretty clear picture from this series of the cultural centers they were running.

I think probably at the same time there was a definite impression in South America that British power was waning. Britain was disappearing from the world scene as the superpower and American power was waxing and there was therefore a good reason, Sauer once commented, to speak English with an American accent not a British accent. So I think there was a psychological and historical impulse there in the area itself for people to get to know Americans better, to take advantage of the Good Neighbor Policy and I think this is where the impetus came from in the field. I wasn't at all surprised when I was talking on the phone with Mr. Howard the other day, when he said, I think I ought to tell you that cultural centers is a field driven program. That is not a term we would have used, but that is exactly what was true then.

Pre-WWII Origin And Organizational Status Of Office Of The Coordinator Of Inter-American Affairs Under Nelson Rockefeller

Q: Was Nelson Rockefeller already the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs when you came into the program?

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JOHNSON: That's right. I can't tell you when he became Coordinator or how long the organization had been going, but I do know that when I came in in March of '42 it was well established and had obviously been going for some time. I think that the existence of the Coordinator's Office was representative of one of the major problems that existed at the time. Roosevelt, as you know, had a tendency to get impatient with the old-line agencies when he wanted something done and they were slow to do it. So, if he wanted a program done in Latin America and he thought the State Department wasn't doing it fast enough, he simply set up a new agency, in this case the Coordinator's Office. They were very good at what they were doing. They were, of course, basically concerned with the same kind of direct approach that OWI would later use in other parts of the world. This was a great contrast with the kind of approach that you got in the Division of Cultural Relations in the State Department. It was one of the turf battles that I think was going on throughout the war. In this case what I would call a geographical turf battle over who was going to control the programs in South America. The Interdepartmental Committee on Inter-American Affairs was set up to deal with this and it would be fascinating if one could get a hold of and look at their files. They did manage to work out a kind of modus vivendi under which the Coordinator's Office handled a lot of what could perhaps be called direct propaganda work. The cultural work, which was much more an interchange program, a much more slow paced and subtle program, was left in the hands of the State Department.

Q: Was Nelson Rockefeller, himself, then in the State Department at that time?

JOHNSON: No, he was the Coordinator.

Q: He was a separate entity.

JOHNSON: He was a separate entity. The whole organization was a completely separate entity.

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Q: But nevertheless you had a staff in the State Department which was doing a certain amount of work in connection with the cultural program for the centers and the activities which he was coordinating.

JOHNSON: No, I think I may have given the wrong impression here. I was in the Coordinator's Office first—that was an entirely separate entity—and I left the Coordinator's Office when I transferred over to the State Department.

Q: I see. Well, to your knowledge at any time during the war did the work of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs get integrated with the OWI program which, of course, developed very shortly into what you might say was a propaganda program during the war, or into the State Department?

JOHNSON: To my knowledge the answer is no. As far as I know, OWI pretty much stayed out of the Latin American countries. The Coordinator's work went on, I believe, to the end of the war as did our own work in the State Department. However, that brings me to what I would call turf problem number two if you think of the first one as being “who is in charge of the program in South America” as being a turf problem. I think the second turf problem came up as a result of the establishment of OWI during the war under Elmer Davis because that immediately raised the question vis-a-vis the State Department cultural program as to what would happen when the war ended and the cultural program moved into areas other than South America. The problem didn't exist during the war because OWI, as far as I know, made no effort to do anything in South America. But that problem immediately became apparent and was very much on the minds of people like Sauer and Schurz and others from that time on.

Q: Under what stage did Ed Murphy come in?

JOHNSON: Murphy came in at the end of the war, but let me just briefly rehearse the evolution of the Washington staff before Ed came in. I won't take much time on it.

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Q: I would like to know pretty much what was happening in the period from the time you went in and until the war ended because certainly that was when the program as we know it today began to be formed.

Role Of Carl Sauer In Development Of The Cultural Center Operation

JOHNSON: As you have probably already heard from Elizabeth, maybe from Ed, there is no way you can talk about cultural centers without talking about Carl Sauer. He was cultural centers. As long as he was there the program did well, and when he was gone, although I was long gone by then, I am sure that its greatest defender was gone. He was a very interesting man, an administrative genius in his own way. He was born in Milwaukee around 1900 and came from a family of German 48ers. And I believe spoke only German until he was 8 or 9 years old. One of the most outstanding things about him was his extraordinary language ability. He was not only bilingual in English and German, he was also bilingual in English and Spanish. Before he went down to Bogota he had been Dean of Students at Claremont College for five years. He was at Bogota for 5 years and there was no question from what everyone told me, that he was extremely successful as director of the center there and that was the reason why Schurz brought him up to direct the Cultural Center Program. He had an extremely organized mind and a very clear vision of what he wanted cultural centers to be and a very clear idea of how to attain that vision. He was the kind of person whose desk never had a paper on it—it was always absolutely clear and that was because he always had done everything right up to the moment. I learned a great deal myself about administration from him—there is no question in my mind about that.

There is also no doubt that Sauer had a dark side to his personality. I was out of the program by October of 1947 and I believe that he did not leave under a cloud until about a year or two later. By that time he was chief of the Division. I was told by people afterwards, because I did have some contacts with people for several years after I left, that there had been allegations of homosexuality against him and of drinking (I think certainly the drinking

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problem was already apparent as early as 1943). So there was this side to him and he was a very moody person, sometimes could be very difficult to get along with, and he could get involved in almost savage vendettas with people. He got in one with Charles Child who was head of the Art Program which only ended when Charles was really hounded out of the Division. But, as I say, you can't really talk about the program and its development without him because he was in a sense the architect of it from then on.

After I came on, there were just the five of us there that I have already mentioned for quite a while. And then Sauer began to move up the corporate ladder, I guess you could call it.

Q: Sauer, although you said he was an administrative genius, also must have had a very extensive role in the establishment of and operation of programs. He must have been equally skillful in that area.

JOHNSON: He certainly was because his success as director of the Bogota institute, which I believe he took from practically nothing and developed into a very highly successful program with literally thousands of people coming to it, was one of the direct proofs of this. And the fact that he had been brought up to Washington because of his success in the field was another proof of this.

Although this was true and he was very important in further developing the field program, I think his greatest success lay in his ability to persuade people in Washington of the value of the cultural centers. In the four years I worked there I saw the budget grow from \$120,000 to well over a million dollars. And if you think what that meant in those days in terms of money it was an extraordinary performance. I had my part in that which I will talk about later, but there is no question in my mind that it was his ability to persuade people like Schurz and the other people who were in charge of the Division, the Assistant Secretaries who were in charge of Cultural Affairs and the Congressional Committees of the value of the program that provided the tremendous boost in money.

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Q: Now when you reached this stage, if he was defending the program before Congress and also was operating on State Department money, were you still, even at that stage in the game, say 1943 or whenever this was, going indirectly through these other organizations that had been handling it in the beginning?

JOHNSON: A very apropos question, because he spent the first year, I would say, persuading Schurz and John Peurifoy, who was then Assistant Secretary of State, to end this arrangement. As for the time when it happened, one would have to look at the letters to see the exact moment it occurred; probably in 1944 the contract was ended with the ACLS and direct control of the cultural centers by the State Department began.

Q: So from that time on what were your particular duties? Were your duties more in the program side or in the supply side to the field, or other aspects of the program?

1945: War Draws Toward Close; Cultural Operations Moves To New Location (War Manpower Building); Sauer Moves To Higher Position; Edmund Murphy Replaces Sauer In Cultural Centers; Reorganization Occurs

JOHNSON: As Sauer began to move up the ladder Elizabeth started moving up the clerical/fiscal side—remember at that time, I don't know if it is still true, Civil Service was divided into two ladders (the so-called Clerical, Administrative and Fiscal (CAF) grades, numbered 1 to 15; and the Professional (P) grades, numbered 1 to 8). I started to move up on the professional side of the career ladder. We had been in the Grant Building across from the Executive Office Building which at that point housed the State Department. Then sometime, again I am a little hazy about the dates, in 1944 or perhaps '45, we moved over to the War Manpower Building which was vacated because the war was winding down. Before we moved over there though, a series of people were brought up to fill the gap that was made by the fact that Sauer was moving up to head a sort of group within the Division. He was now, for instance, in charge of the Art Program as well as Cultural Centers. And as I remember the sequence, first Ples Harper came up from Lima for a

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while. He didn't get along too well with Carl Sauer's assistant, Mary Agnes Young, and left. Paul Hadley, who had been director at the center in Asuncion, came up and stayed only a short time. Then Lionel Landry came in, who had been Sauer's assistant in Bogota. They filled a kind of intermediate position that had been held by Sauer—Sauer was really keeping his hands on the reins as far as cultural centers were concerned. They were acting more as assistants to him rather than as actually chiefs of the section. Then after the change over to the War Manpower Building, I would say just about the same time, and we must be talking now about 1945 because otherwise Ed wouldn't have been demobbed from what he was doing. As I remember he was on a destroyer in the north Atlantic. Ed came in and he really had the job, as I understood it, that Sauer had had as head. But I think he was never anything but Acting Chief of Cultural Centers. I just have to take a moment out to say that he was a wonderful person to work for. He wasn't as organized as Sauer and he maybe didn't have the grand visions of things that Sauer had, but he was wonderful with people and he was a very hard working person. I think he did a great deal for the program.

Sauer in the meantime moved upward and eventually became co-head of the Division with Lawrence Morris who was someone that I had met in some classes that I had taken at American University at night.

But let's see, you were asking about my own job. Okay. I moved up gradually on the professional side of things and by the time Ed came in a major reorganization occurred. That was the mode we were in until I left, and I think for a considerable time thereafter. Field personnel was split off under Elizabeth. In one office there was Elizabeth, Ed and a secretary. Elizabeth really took charge of keeping track of people who were sent down, etc. The other side, what I would call the program side of things, was divided up among three of us. Lionel Landry was put in charge of the South American centers except for the ones in Brazil. Leonard Klein was brought up from Bahia where he had been director of the center for years, and put in charge of the centers in Brazil. I was put in charge of the centers in Central America and the Caribbean area. So there was basically, therefore, on

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the program side a geographical division between the three of us—with Elizabeth handling field personnel.

Then, in addition to that, there were certain functional things that were divided up between Lionel, Leonard and myself. Lionel, for instance, was asked to work on the English teaching side of things because, as you said in your letter—who had ever heard of ESL in those days, nobody, it didn't exist. And as you will see from my articles, there were people working in the centers on books and other things that they could use. One of the kind of things that Sauer was doing was trying to act as a clearing house for this kind of information and get it around to the various centers so that if something was developed in one center that he thought would be useful in others the other centers could be given samples of it, etc. Leonard was working on some of the other center programs like the lectures, music and art. I was asked to take on the question of developing the center libraries. So you could say that I really had those two functions—being in charge of the centers in Central America and the Caribbean and in charge of developing the center libraries.

In addition to that I had from the very beginning been keeping at Sauer's request a little loose leaf notebook in which I kept track of all the money that was spent on each center and how they spent it, as well as the attendance figures—how many English classes, how many Spanish classes, how many people attended them, what kind of lectures, music concerts, art exhibits and how many people saw them. We got monthly reports from all of the centers and tried to answer every report at least to the point of saying thank you for sending it, if nothing else. These people had been living with sort of absolute silence until Sauer came up and this program got underway in the State Department. Part of what he was trying to do, that we were all trying to do, I think, was to just let them know that there was somebody up there who cared about them and who was trying to help them and provide them with whatever we could on our limited budget, provide them with something in the way of assistance. I think in the course of keeping all these fiscal and attendance statistics, and reading all the reports, it became easy for me to provide

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a lot of the preliminary raw material for the annual budget to Sauer and to Murphy. So after a while it got to the point where I would work with someone like Murphy or Sauer in preparing the annual budget for presentation to Congress. I discovered rather early, in 1945, as a result of keeping these statistics, that the centers were providing more than half of the money that was being spent on them.

Q: I presume that money came essentially from the English teaching program, or were there other program aspects that were money raisers also?

Washington Office Develops Into Support For Centers—On One Occasion Assists Extensively In Establishing Center In Guatemala

JOHNSON: Yes, you are quite right, of course, that the money in the field came basically from the English teaching programs. But I think they also did have some dues in some of the centers depending just locally on what they wanted to do.

I think it was a tremendous selling point in the Congressional Committees for someone like Sauer to be able to go in and say, "Look these people are raising 50 percent of the money that is being spent down there. All we are providing them with is an American director and some English teachers and they are doing all the rest themselves. Each board of a cultural center is made up of half, lets say Colombians, and half of local Americans. Therefore, you have a true inter-cultural exchange going on here." That was always a big selling point.

Q: As part of your duties you said that you were made the person responsible for program operations in the Caribbean area, what was it that you had to do in that connection as part of your official duties?

JOHNSON: One of the first things I ought to mention is that it was just at this point that we began to get news that there was a man in Guatemala City, Jimmy Osgood, who was running a kind of center down there, and that he was interested in developing it into a full fledged cultural center and the idea seemed to go over well with the ambassador. So we

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set about organizing the center from scratch. I think this was one of the rare cases where something of this sort was done with a lot of intervention from within the Washington staff. Osgood came up and we talked to him a lot about what we were doing and the kind of assistance we could give him and the kind of salary that could be paid to him and the kind of English teachers we could pay. And then he went back down and did start the center.

Q: Was he a Guatemalan?

JOHNSON: No, he was an American.

Q: He was an American who was living there.

JOHNSON: Yes.

Q: So he had not been recruited from Washington.

JOHNSON: No, that is right.

So that was one of the things that I was involved in—the founding of the center in Guatemala City. Although I would have to say that my role was not any where near as important as say Murphy and Sauer in talking it over with Osgood and making decisions.

The thing that we did in general was to receive reports every month from the centers and try through the medium of our responses to the report to show that we were interested in what they were doing, that we wanted to congratulate them on the good things they were doing and that we were trying to pass along information to them of what other centers were doing in the same field. I remember writing instructions, for instance, saying—I see you have developed this particular program, you might be interested in knowing what they are doing in Bogota—and then passing along certain information of that sort.

When there were visiting lecturers that were paid for by other programs in the State Department going down, we would arrange with the centers so that they could have these

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people available to give lectures or concerts, etc. I remember, for instance, that Aaron Copeland went down at one point. We informed the centers that he was coming and what his schedule would be and how they could get in touch with whoever was representing him to arrange for a concert or whatever he was doing. There was a famous historian from one of the big eastern universities (William Heseltine) that went down.

One of the things that I did, this is a little digression, was orient people who were going down. Elizabeth would talk to them about the things you were talking about, how they would get paid, etc., but then they would come to me and I would try to explain to them how our program fitted in to the whole scheme of things, how it fit into the State Department and what the centers were and how they would be helping the centers, etc. Then we would write to the centers saying that this man was going to be coming down, you will want, I am sure, to use him.

In general, I suppose the word we would use now would be “stroking”. It was mainly a job of encouragement, trying to inform them, we were a service organization. I think it would be a great mistake to think of us as a policy forming organization. Nobody thought about policy at all. We all knew what the policy was. There was no disagreement. There was a war going on, the idea was to show the United States as it was. We were not selling anything. This was very different, by the way, from the Coordinator's Office. In the cultural program there was no idea of selling the United States. We wanted the centers to present it as it really was and to let people make up their own minds about it. The centers were places for cultural interchange—a two way street. Part of the libraries were in Spanish; local artists and musicians were exhibited; lectures by local professors were encouraged. I think there was no disagreement between us and the centers on this. We were all in total agreement so we never talked about it. I don't know, maybe people like Sauer or Archibald MacLeish, who was Assistant Secretary in Cultural Affairs for awhile (and later Librarian of Congress), thought about these things but certainly nobody at our level thought about

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them. We knew what we were trying to do and they knew down in the field what we were trying to do.

A Number Of Organizations, Governmental And Private, Were Sending Lecturers, Art and Performing Art Groups Or Individuals, Etc. To Latin America. Cultural Centers Sought To Coordinate Their Appearances Through Cultural Center Chain

Q: You had nothing to do with the recruitment or the planning of sending these lecturers or performers down. Were they selected by the Coordinator's Office?

JOHNSON: It would depend on what kind of person. It was very often some other branch of the cultural division that was recruiting. It might be, for instance, somebody from the music section or the art section who had got the money for this tour. Sometimes they were going down under quite different auspices—perhaps under private organizations. They would just tell us that they would be going and the centers, of course, were the natural place to show them off; for them to give their lectures, etc. I think that probably there was a whole lot of different kinds of sponsorship for different people. Most of them certainly weren't going on State Department money.

Q: I had always been under the impression that the Cultural Center Program, at least in the later years of the war, had been operating under the Coordinator's Office which was within the State Department at that time. I gather from you that you have a different impression of that.

JOHNSON: Oh, definitely. The Coordinator's Office was not in any way, that I know of, operated by the State Department. It's possible that at the Interdepartmental Committee level there may have been some understanding of umbrella control by the State Department, but there was never any evidence of it when I was in the Coordinator's Office. I presume that there must have been some kind of understanding that in that last analysis the State Department was responsible for American foreign policy and had to be in charge.

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But as far as actual contact, except perhaps in the Interdepartmental Committee, I don't think there was any.

Q: But also, I gather from what you said, the Cultural Center Program was not under the Coordinator's Office.

JOHNSON: No, not at all. Not in any way.

Q: That was entirely a State Department operation.

JOHNSON: That's right. The Division of Cultural Relations as it existed when I came in (it went through many permutations afterwards, especially after the OWI libraries were brought into it) consisted of basically the Exchange of Persons Program, that was the largest program; the China Program, that Wilma Fairbank was in and Haldore Hanson and Bill Dennis; the Free Libraries and Book Programs which were run originally by Virginia Alexander and then by Eleanor Lewis; the Art Program, which was run by Charles Child and later by Leroy Davidson when the great blowup with Congress occurred; and the Cultural Centers Program. That was basically it. At the end of the war, of course, the OWI libraries were brought into the program. The name was changed to Libraries and Institute because very often cultural centers were referred to as institutes. As I remember, William Benton, at that point had been director of OWI and was brought in as Assistant Secretary of State in charge of the combined program. I do remember his coming over and talking to us as a group about what he had in mind.

At End Of War, OWI Integrated Into The Department Of State; Tended To Dominate Public Diplomacy Activities At Expense Of Cultural Side Of Program

I would like to say at this point that it was already clear at that point what was going to happen in the future. When the OWI people came into the State Department they had a strong united feeling among themselves about the programs that they had been operating during the war. They came into positions of control. Benton would be a perfect example

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of this. From that moment on, I would say that the cultural program became a stepchild within its own part of the State Department. In my opinion what happened afterwards went back to the fact that I had talked about earlier, that the State Department never was really at ease with the cultural program and administering it directly. When the crunch came after the war as to which of the two programs was going to survive and get the money, everything was in place so that the OWI programs would get the money, control and prestige and the cultural programs would lose out. I suspect that as long as Sauer was there he probably was able to protect his part of the program, but with him gone I think the last person who had the strength and connections to prevent the ultimate breakdown of control was gone. Now I am speculating about this last part because I wasn't there when he left. But all the pieces were there so I was not at all surprised to discover afterwards and to hear now that it was really basically the OWI program that took over.

The other thing that I would say is this. It is a lot easier in a way in a cold war world to sell to Congress a program like the OWI program. You have an enemy and you know who the enemy is and you know what you have to do. You have a selling job to do. The cultural program, which antedated the war by a number of years, and which was basically not war oriented but peace oriented, I think will always suffer in that kind of climate. Now who knows, we are not at the end of the story yet, because we may move in to a peace oriented climate in which this type of program will once again make more sense.

Q: Unfortunately, I didn't get into the program until really almost the end of 1949 and then only as a budget analyst, so I am unclear myself as to exactly at what stage some of these developments occurred. The OWI, I know, did come into the State Department. Benton was made the director at the time that that happened. The cultural program was there and probably the two were operating simultaneously under what was the U.S. Informational and Educational Program (USIE) along with the Exchange Program. Both suffered when Congress eliminated both programs for almost a year, but then came the crank-up for the State Department to take over the German program from the Army. The Army was running a full-fledged information and cultural exchange program in Germany under the

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Occupation Government of the United States in Europe. So until about 1950 the Army ran that operation. Then the State Department took it over when the Occupation ended and the High Commissioner of Germany was established. At that time the State Department was running a tremendous information and cultural exchange program in Germany. They would have 4 and 5,000 exchangees a year coming over here from Germany. Furthermore, they had access to all the so called counterpart funds. So at one time the German program was running on a budget of around \$70-80 million dollars a year. Of course the cultural program was a very large part of it then. So it came back into the total program as a full-fledged operation once the High Commissioner of Germany operation began. That was when I really began to get associated full scale with the information program, and I don't know exactly what the history was before that.

We got a little ahead of ourselves here in talking about the development of the full scale information and education program after the war and I failed to mention that the Fulbright program came along in '48. That gave a great impetus to the cultural exchange program. But I would like to go back now and ask you to deal rather extensively, if you will, with what you were doing in that interim period, say from '43 until the end of the war when you were still operating as a cultural program solely within the Department of State.

JOHNSON: Well, let me give you an idea about the amount of information that was being generated here. When I started in the middle of '43 the Cultural Center files in the State Department took up one and a half file drawers. One of the things I did in my spare time, in those first months I was there, was to just simply read through the files. By the time I left in August of 1947, I would make a guess that we had somewhere between four and six 4-drawer file cabinets full of correspondence with the centers, not including the personnel correspondence which was kept separately. So a tremendous volume of correspondence was created during this period where before there had been almost none between the center and the field program. At one point Sauer asked me to send a little newsletter around to the centers and sporadically I would collect the kind of information that is in my

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two articles and create a little newsletter and send it around. I don't know if there are any copies in the files or not.

Budget Legerdemain At The End Of Fiscal Years Helped Fund Cultural Centers

As part of the budget job that I was describing earlier, Sauer, Ed and I concocted a little scheme to get more money down to the centers. In those days the fiscal year ended on June 30 and Sauer got an agreement with a number of programs in the State Department including other programs in the Cultural Division, that whatever monies were left in their accounts on June 30 would be transferred overnight into the Cultural Centers account. I would get prepared by our secretary a telegram to each of the centers in which we would make a grant of so much money on June 30 to the center. We just left the amount blank. On June 29 we would find out how much had been dumped into the Cultural Centers account from the other accounts and we would apportion the amounts to the centers and then I would fill in the amounts and literally walk the telegrams through the four or five people in the State Department who had to approve them before they could go out. This way we would get anywhere from \$100 to \$150 thousand dollars more into their hands before the fiscal year expired which they could then spend at their leisure.

Q: I begin to see now what the connection was and how you could preserve that money at the end of the year. Because normally if an appropriation is not fully obligated by the end of the year, at least in those days, the money was lost and returned to the Treasury—the State Department no longer controlled it. Now if the State Department had actually been running the centers per se, I don't think they could have done that because what they did was to make an allotment to a center which apparently was nominally independent, and therefore was a recipient of money and therefore you could set up an obligation which could then be expended over the next two-year period. And the State Department had gotten rid of its responsibility for that money as far as its obligation was concerned. So I think I begin to understand a little bit the kind of mechanism that was used to do that.

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Organizing Cultural Center Libraries Into Comprehensible Arrangement Of Books

JOHNSON: On the library side of things, I had had no special library experience, but the situation in the cultural center libraries was very elementary. For example, none of them had, to my knowledge, what we would call a free lending library. They didn't even know what the concept was. Their method of keeping track of their books was just to assign a number to each book as it came in—1, 2, 3, 4, 5—and that was the only way they kept track of it. They didn't have card catalogs or anything of that sort. Although I had no professional library training, one couldn't get a degree from the University of Chicago without getting thorough familiarity with the University of Chicago card catalog. One of the first things that I did was to suggest that we get a list of every book that they had in their libraries and send the list over to the Library of Congress which agreed to send Library of Congress cards in the correct number down to the centers. Every center sent up a list of all the books they had and the cards were sent down with instructions on how to organize the card catalog properly, title, author, subject, added entries, etc. It was about 1945, about the time Ed came in, that a traveling librarian, Josephine Fabilli, a trained librarian, was hired. She went around to the libraries and showed them how to operate and they began to operate as free lending libraries for the first time. Moreover, we made an attempt to get a lot of standard reference works down there so that every library would have a certain group of books.

Attempts In Late 40's To Augment And Upgrade Center Library Book Collections Largely Terminated By Growing Fear Throughout Government About Accusations Of Left Wing Leanings

One of the questions on the little list that you sent me asked about the failures. Well, one of them was that at one point I got the idea that it might be a good thing to make sure that every cultural center library had a core group of U.S. books in it—not reference books, but just American classics of one sort or another. I suggested this to Ed and he took it to Sauer who thought it was a good idea and made the suggestion that he had already done

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this in the Bogota center and why not just get their list of books sent up to us. We could send it around to all the centers and say whatever ones you don't have we will order for you. So I went ahead on that basis. I remember it was a huge undertaking because, as you can imagine, the list came up from Bogota and was an inch thick and it took a lot of typing by the secretary to get the thing onto stencils. Then Sauer got cold feet because by this time the art program brouhaha had occurred and he began to see the possibility, (I never talked it over with him, but I am sure this is what was in his mind) that somebody in Congress might object to Mark Twain, or something. The notion that we would have suggested that they have all these books—it was all right as long as they were asking us for the books, but if we sent them a list and said these are the books which you should have—that could make it immediately a problem. So one of the things I left behind when I left in 1947 was a whole table of mimeographed lists of books in the Bogota library which, of course, were never sent down. So, I suppose you have to call that a failure.

Q: Then in all the time that you were in the program you didn't have the responsibility for originating suggestions or selecting books to send to them other than what you got as a request from the center coming up to Washington.

JOHNSON: Except for the reference books. You are quite right. They would request books from us—first Miss Guard and then later the whole procurement aspect of things was simply moved over with Eleanor Lewis and the book program—and that took us off the hook.

Q: But you had no role in originating the suggestion on the kind of books that they wanted?

JOHNSON: No, but I believe Eleanor did, as part of her book program. Except certain English teaching books. We would notify them that certain English teaching texts were available, had been developed by other centers, or Spanish teaching materials—text books of that sort.

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Q: I don't know at what stage it occurred, but already by the time I came into the program in '49 and early '50, selection of books were being made from Washington—posts were told they were available and if they wanted them we would procure them for the post and send them down. So that probably developed out of Eleanor Lewis' operation.

JOHNSON: It probably did, yes. I never talked to Sauer why he stopped this. It always had seemed like a good idea to me, but whatever his reason, I can only guess that this was the reason—there had been this terrific uproar over the art program and, of course, we were beginning to move into this miasma of fear in 1947 that was to engulf the Department. The McCarran Act had been passed and I remember that each of us had to go into Clarence Canary's office to get our paycheck. He sat there with the paycheck in one hand and this little sheet of paper which he said you had to sign before you can get your paycheck. Of course, what it was was “I have never undertaken the overthrow of the United States Government by force or violence, etc., etc.” You signed and you got your paycheck. That was the beginning of it. But by the time that I left, I would say that probably the atmosphere was getting about as close to a Russian atmosphere as one can imagine. People were beginning to take out personal vendettas by informing on other people in the Department—saying, he or she is really a homosexual, or drinker or... The atmosphere was getting very poisonous. Now it was very interesting that when I got this really wonderful letter of recommendation from Ed Murphy when I left, as he handed it to me he said, “Dorothy I want everybody who reads this letter to know you left of your own accord.” And that was what the atmosphere was like at that point—that he would have to say that—I was nearly struck dumb by his saying it.

Q: The McCarran Act was passed before I got into the State Department. He was a senator from Nevada and I remember the effects of the McCarran Act even as early as 1950 when I got into it, but I wasn't in the Department when it was enacted. What other experiences do you have from your period with the program that you would like to talk about?

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JOHNSON: I would like to mention one little incident that occurred and that was shortly after MacLeish came in as Assistant Secretary of State in charge of cultural affairs. At that point our budget was still quite small, probably about \$120,000 or \$140,000. We submitted it with about a 10 percent increase, or something like that, and it came back from MacLeish with a word written at the top—"Peanuts!" Sauer looked at it and said, well, all right if that is the way he was we would prepare a new budget. We doubled everything, going up to about \$240,000.

Q: Who was the author of "peanuts"?

JOHNSON: MacLeish. There was just the one word "Peanuts!" and then his initials, I think, were underneath it. We sent it back to him and he put it right through Congress. That was really the beginning of the major increase in the program. I have never forgotten that.

Q: You started to say something about your first meeting with Clarence Canary. When did he come into the program? He had been down in Brazil, himself, I think, in some kind of a cultural program, but I don't know exactly what.

JOHNSON: Well, I am trying to think. He was the Division personnel director after Dave Scull. He was in charge of the Civil Service people in the Division. I don't remember exactly when he came in but he was certainly there in '46 and '47, but I can't place it exactly when he came in.

This might be a good point to stop...

Final Assignment Before Leaving Cultural Centers Program: Compilation Of Department Of State Documents Regarding Cultural Centers Origins And Programs

Q: While we were off tape, you mentioned that one of your final activities before you left the program was at Murphy's direction a compilation of the documents which had been

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compiled in the State Department with regard to the centers program. Will you talk a little bit about that?

JOHNSON: At this point, about August 1947, I think a request must have come over from the Archives asking that the important documents that had been developed during the war be separated out and sent over to the Archives. So one of the last things I did before I left the program was go through all of the cultural center files and pull out whatever I thought would be of interest to a future historian and set them all aside—leaving things like procurement files and things of that sort in the main files. In those days we did not have the advantages of xerox, but I presumed that they may have been photo copied or something. In talking with Mr. Manning, the USIA historian, I got the impression that those separated files are still under his control.

Q: Martin Manning—in charge of the USIA Historical Collection—is a single operator down there in the basement of what used to be HEW-South. He is technically under the control of the library. He doesn't get very much assistance, in fact, he has no assistant at all. He is a one-man gang, but is doing a wonderful job of cataloging all of this material and keeping it on the shelves. He has things that other people have forgotten ever existed. I didn't know that he had these files, but I will now talk to him about it. He may have the very files you accumulated at the time of your departure from the program.

JOHNSON: As you may know, I have already talked to both Mr. Manning and Mr. Howard about the possibility of developing an official history of the Cultural Centers Program during the war. The idea first came to me when a former student of Paul's, who is now teaching at one of the universities in New York, Frank Ninkovich was writing an article for one of the scholarly historical journals on the upset in the art program in 1944 and since Frank knew that I had been in the cultural program he came around and interviewed me. One of the things that I realized was that someone like Frank who comes along 20, 30, 40, 50 years later doesn't even know the right questions to ask, much less know the answers to the questions. So I began to think about this. He mentioned the fact that Wilma

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Fairbank had written up a history of the China program that was in the Cultural Division. I got to wondering as to whether anyone had written up the history of the Cultural Centers Program.

Q: I don't think anyone has.

JOHNSON: No. From what Mr. Manning said, I began to realize that what had happened was that they had asked people to write up regional programs. What Wilma was writing up was not the China program, but a regional program. What had happened was that they had asked Manuel Espinosa to do South America, and he had done it and a book came out under the State Department auspices. He covered the Cultural Centers Program in his book, but of course Espinosa was in exchange of persons and really didn't know anything about cultural centers. I presumed he must have interviewed people like Elizabeth Hopkins and Ed Murphy and looked at the files. But of course he couldn't have any really inside view of what had happened in cultural centers.

Q: How did you get in touch with Martin Manning?

JOHNSON: Through another former student of Paul's, General Jacques Klein, who is now the Director of Training for the Foreign Service. There was an exchange of letters between Paul and Jacques Klein and I said why don't you ask him who would be in charge of these papers now. So, I guess he asked around and got the response that it would be Martin Manning. So that is how I happened to get in touch with him.

Q: So you called Martin.

JOHNSON: Yes, that is right. He was astonished to find that there was somebody around who had been in the program that he didn't even know about. But as soon as I said I'm DEG, he immediately said, oh, oh, you are DEG. Of course he has stacks and stacks of instructions with the initials DEG on them.

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Q: Before we close the interview, lets talk a little bit about what you did after you left the program and was it influenced by what you were doing in the Department.

JOHNSON: Well, Paul was at that point teaching at Denison University in Granville, Ohio and we went back there a couple of years and then we returned to the University of Chicago. We both took advanced degrees. He took his doctorate and I took both an MA and a Ph.D. in modern history. We both taught in the college history program—he for a shorter time than I. Then he taught at Roosevelt University, mostly modern American history. I guess it was 1967 when we went to Scotland—Paul had a Fulbright at the University of Edinburgh. Later on I went into the Jane Addams papers project (Addams was founder of Hull House and leader of the U.S. Settlements), which was one of the big microfilm projects sponsored by the NEH. I was doing the annotation and indexing of all the Jane Addams letters—there were a 100,000 of them—in the preparation of what was one of the first microfilm indexes done. I retired in 1982 and have been retired ever since.

Q: Do you think of anything that we haven't commented on?

JOHNSON: No.

Q: Thank you very much.

End of interview